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# Better rewards could encourage recycling

By Sumarni Tungal

KUCHING – The people are willing to adopt certain recycling programmes if they can understand the benefits such programmes will bring, according to a recent study by three researchers from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS).

However, the trio – Dr Kopli Bujang, Dr. Tonga Noweg and Dr Abang Ahmad Riduan Abang Awit – found that monetary incentives or rewards could have a more direct influence to ensure these programme attracted maximum participation.

A survey was carried out to assess and study the attitude and understanding of the public for recycling and material-recovery.

Of the 915 individuals interviewed in the study, 80 per cent said they had heard of recycling but only 66 per cent had practised recycling their household wastes in one way or another.

The areas covered in the study were under Kuching North City Hall.

Following an explanation on waste recovery and recycling, a majority of the respondents agreed that wastes should be recycled and re-used.

The agreement was based on economic prospects (52 per cent), to avoid pollution and less dumping sites (26 per cent) and health reasons (2 per cent), said the three researchers who are attached to the Faculty of Resource Science and Technology at

UNIMAS.

The study suggested that recycling was very much driven by the commercial nature of the operation rather than a concern for the environment.

Of the respondents' materials sent for recycling, 57.4 of the glass bottles were sold to private collectors/vendors. A total of 33.3 per cent of the paper wastes were sold to private collectors/vendors for recycling.

## Contrast

In contrast, the city council only collected 10.5 per cent of the glass bottles sent for recycling. The city council also collected only 6.2 per cent of the paper wastes sent for recycling.

Another four per cent of the paper wastes were sent to factories for recycling. The study also found that 32.1 per cent of the glass bottles and 56.5 per cent of the paper wastes were not sent for recycling.

The researchers said: "Thus, it is clear that private collectors play a more significant role in recycling of empty bottles and old newspapers. The public are obviously expecting a more tangible benefit as in monetary reward rather than the general awareness in having a clean and healthy environment.

"Preference for private collectors is due to their diligence in house to house collection together with immediate cash payments."

The use of incentives is also a useful tool to in-



Workers recycling wood in Kuching

crease the amount of materials recovered and number of individuals participating in such programmes.

Of the respondents, 47 per cent were satisfied with the prices paid for the recyclable materials, while 21 per cent preferred higher payments and 32 per cent were not sure or indifferent about payments.

The current prices for recyclable materials are as follows: bottles RM0.05 per unit, paper RM0.30 per kilogramme and aluminium cans RM0.80 per kilogramme.

The respondents suggested that these prices be increased to: bottles RM0.10 per unit, paper RM0.60 per kilogramme and aluminium cans RM2 per kilogramme.

Purchases of bottled soft drinks often involved payments of deposits for the return of the empty glass bottle.

However, there were no cash rewards paid for the recycling of paper and other wood products, they added.

They also said that 90 percent of the public interviewed hoped that the city council play a more significant role in garbage collection and general sanitation.

They suggested that the city council, local government agencies and private

sector also performed a more significant role in setting standards of concerns for the environment for the public to emulate.

"This may come as an introduction to a more effective method of garbage collection, having more drop-off points for cans, bottles and newsprint and continuous re-cycling programmes targetted at school children," they added.

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